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ETHICS, RELIGION AND FARM ANIMAL WELFARE

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INTRODUCTION

Farmed animals do not capture the ethical attention of most ordinary people. This is partly because, in the UK and other developed Western societies, the large majority of people do not live in close proximity to them. It is also because farmed animals are typically viewed at a group level rather than individually, and so do not have the personal attributes projected onto them that might suggest they are worthy of moral consideration. Nevertheless, animals that are farmed have a close relation to humans. This is shown by their vulnerability, especially their inability to defend themselves against predators and disease (Palmer 2011). It is also shown by their dependency, with farmed animals having been reared to have their needs met principally by humans. Due to this close relation with humans, farmed animals deserve a high level of ethical consideration by humans.

This chapter focuses mostly on ethics, with particular reference to the UK, and then considers religious issues toward the end. This is because most people in the UK accept the validity of some kind of ethical principle to regulate human actions, whereas fewer people, at least where farm animal welfare is concerned, draw their principles from religion. Nevertheless, religion provides strong motivating principles for a minority of people and so cannot be altogether disregarded.

ETHICS

Consumers are increasingly concerned about the welfare of the farmed animals whose meat and other products they buy (Mayfield, Bennett, Tranter and Wooldridge 2007), and food retailers of all sizes are well aware of this concern. In order to gain and preserve market share, meat and farm animal products will need to be ethically sustainable: that is, to meet the rising ethical expectations of consumers. Although expectations will be higher among some individual consumers and consumer groups than others, ethics is an important business concern for all products and suppliers.

Nevertheless, ethics can never be a matter of mere business advantage. Going beyond purely instrumental concerns, such as maximizing sales or profit, ethics concerns the fundamental principles that shape how business decisions are made. Indeed, it may well call business priorities into question. Ethical action requires i) knowledge of relevant facts; ii) the acceptance of one or more ethical principles; and iii) the capacity to relate facts to ethical principles in practice. I shall now consider each of these in turn.

Knowledge

Consumers have different kinds of ethically relevant knowledge about the meat and farm animal products they buy, dependent on retailer type and size. Independent retailers, such as butchers, farm shops and delicatessens, are likely to have a short supply chain and a high level of knowledge about the conditions in which their animals have been reared and slaughtered, which may therefore be presumed to be relatively good (Mayfield, Bennett and Turner 2007, 128–31). Information with ethical relevance, such as how animals have been housed or pastured, what they have been fed, and the distance of travel to the slaughterhouse, may be obtained via conversation with shop staff and as local knowledge. When obtaining information this way, a degree of trust is necessary. However, because of the possibility of direct consumer verification and the likely negative impact on a business of giving false information, it is reasonable to place trust in the claims made. Levels of consumer trust in these retailers are indeed generally high (Agricultural and Horticulture Development Board 2015).

In contrast, there is a common perception among supermarket customers that little information is available to them about the meat and animal products they buy (Mayfield, Bennett and Turner 2007, 132–7). This perception is not entirely true. Rather, the information to which such customers have access is differently presented, and its interpretation requires contextual knowledge. Meat and farm animal products purchased in supermarkets are obviously subject to extensive and complex legislative requirements, with compliance verified by Food Standards Agency inspectors and local authority trading

standards officers. Indeed, the formal registration, monitoring and inspection processes required by law are, in some respects, more rigorous for the large producers that supply supermarkets than for the small producers who supply independent retailers. Moreover, the information needed to trace the origin of any piece of meat or farm animal product on sale is available on its packaging, with the oval approval identification mark either containing a local authority approval code and unique number, or indicating where on the packaging these may be found. The country of origin is also indicated and, for products sourced from overseas, a similar coding system permits equivalent traceability. This information enables the consumer, should they wish, to find the exact farm or slaughterhouse of origin. If a slaughterhouse, this will, like a farm, be subject to many legislative requirements, with compliance verified by veterinary oversight and periodic inspection. Moreover, in 2015 the Food Standards Agency completed a programme of unannounced inspections in the wake of public concern following some isolated but widely publicized abuses. When purchasing meat and animal products in supermarkets, consumers may reasonably have a high level of trust that the products on sale comply with the minimal animal welfare requirements that are defined in legislation.

However, as suggested above, one of the reasons consumers may shop at independent retailers is that they believe the products on sale are from animals that have enjoyed a welfare standard higher than the minimum required by law. In supermarkets, however, it is generally not possible to obtain information about the conditions in which animals have been farmed by informal means. Because of this, formal mechanisms have been developed to present meat and farm animal products as ethically sourced. Third-party farm assurance schemes allow retailers to display a logo on those products that meet a specified set of animal welfare requirements for the sector in question, with compliance periodically checked, often annually, by the certification body. However, these schemes do not necessarily indicate anything more than mere compliance with the law. Even this is sometimes according to a minimalist interpretation (Compassion in World Farming 2012), and consumer trust in assurance schemes is variable (Mayfield, Bennett and Turner 2007, 142–4). In the UK, the application of an objectively high and detailed welfare standard is indicated by the 'RSPCA Assured' logo, which is the certification mark of its Freedom Food programme, with the welfare standards for each animal species running to literally hundreds of requirements (RSPCA, n.d.). However, this standard is in practice met for laying hens and pigs far more frequently than for cattle, sheep or meat chickens (Pickett, Crossley and Sutton 2014, 26).

Knowledge is an excellent and frequently underrated starting point for ethics, enabling principles to be applied to real-life situations, thereby often improving them. Regrettably, in public discussions about farm animal welfare it is often in short supply, with complex practical issues frequently misunderstood or oversimplified. Nonetheless, even when a person possesses a high degree of knowledge, this does not by itself generate an ethical decision because, with regard to choice, knowledge is strictly neutral. Something beyond simple facts is needed to provide a person with the principles to shape their response to those facts.

Principles

In modern Britain, a range of ethical principles have been articulated and deployed with reference to farm animal welfare. Although each is differently grounded, they are in practice frequently complementary. The greater challenge is not which ethical principle to accept in preference to others, but promoting ethical reasoning in general as a means of improving welfare outcomes. In this section, I shall outline in turn three possible ethical principles and demonstrate the relevance of each to welfare.

Utility: considering the consequences for animals

In the revolutionary year of 1789, the philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham asserted, in his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*: 'the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?' (Bentham 1996, 283). Bentham was discussing where the species boundaries of ethical consideration should be drawn, arguing that these extend beyond humans to encompass animals. By their exclusion from ethical consideration, animals have, he protests, been 'degraded into the class of *things*'. Although Bentham personally liked animals (Boralevi 1984, 165–75), he had no problem with killing them for meat. He reckoned that meat-eating, while benefitting humans, leaves animals no worse off, given their inability to experience the state of death. Indeed, Bentham contends that death at human hands 'commonly is, and always may be, a speedier, and by that means a less painful one, than that which would await them in the inevitable course of nature'.

However, he argues passionately that animals should not be, in his words, ‘tormented’, whether during life or at death.

The principle of utility is that the morality of actual and prospective actions should be assessed with reference to consequences. For Bentham, utility may be measured in terms of impact on the interests of individuals. The fundamental interest of all sentient beings, he contends, is to seek pleasure and avoid pain, with each of these characterised by intensity, duration, certainty, closeness, the likelihood of continuation and how far they extend (Bentham 1996, 38–41). From an animal welfare perspective, a great strength of Bentham’s position is that humans and animals are viewed as comprising a single moral community, even if, as Bentham himself recognised, humans experience political, moral and religious pleasure and pain in addition to the physical pleasure and pain that animals feel.

John Stuart Mill developed Bentham’s ideas, particularly his distinction between different kinds of pleasure and pain, by distinguishing higher pleasures from lower pleasures (Hauskeller 2012). This could be assumed to mean that, in a trade-off between the interests of humans and the interests of farmed animals, the latter are likely to come off worse because their pleasures and pains count for less. However, in his *Utilitarianism*, which was first published in 1861 as a trio of magazine articles, Mill regarded humans as different from animals in only two ways: the greater extent of their sympathy, and their more highly developed intelligence. Unlike ‘other’ animals, whose instinct is self-defence or self-protection, humans are, he writes, able to sympathise with all sentient beings (Mill 1998, 186–7). Furthermore, their superior intelligence, as well as giving a ‘wider range to the whole of their sentiments’, enables them to apprehend a ‘community of interest’ that extends far beyond their immediate circle. Mill calls into question moral decision making that fails to take account of wider interests, including the interests of farmed animals.

Since Bentham and Mill, utility has become a major ethical principle in farm animal welfare, underlying much current effort to raise standards. In particular, the Five Freedoms—from hunger and thirst; from discomfort; from pain, injury or disease; to express normal behaviour; and from fear and distress—are grounded in the acceptance that farmed animals should not suffer, and provide a useful and widely accepted structure for appraising welfare (Webster 2005, 12–16). However, four of these five freedoms are expressed negatively. Only the fourth freedom, to express normal behaviour, defines the satisfaction of interests positively. At least potentially, utility may promote not merely the avoidance of suffering but the maximization of positive welfare states through animal flourishing. This will be discussed further below, in the subsection on teleology.

Utility is sometimes critiqued on the grounds that it reduces all objects, and even all people, to their instrumental value within a system of unending consumption, with the items under consideration being assumed to possess no intrinsic value. However, Bentham and Mill each saw themselves as working for social improvement, including by increasing the degree of ethical sensibility in society. With regard to farm animal welfare, the greater difficulty with utilitarianism is the supposition that pain and pleasure may be compared. From a physiological viewpoint, pain is the experience associated with nociceptor stimulation, but there is no single equivalent physiological pathway for the experience of pleasure. This suggests that pleasure is a more diffuse and varied sensation than pain and that it is difficult to compare the two systematically.

For Bentham and Mill, utility was an ethical theory capable of motivating many practical welfare improvements. However, recent utilitarians such as Peter Singer (1998) have radicalised the classical utilitarian concern for animals by arguing that, according to the terms of the theory, the only consistent position ethical position is, at the least, vegetarianism, and possibly veganism. From an animal welfare perspective, the difficulty with this position is that, by suggesting that utilitarianism requires the abolition of animal consumption, and possibly of all human use of animals, it calls into question the tremendous gains that the principle of utility has brought, and continues to bring, to real life outcomes.

Deontology: a duty of care for animals

While Bentham was developing and deploying his ethical principle of utility, Immanuel Kant was setting out with great precision the alternative principle of deontology. Kant respected the practical moral reasoning that Mill recognised in his discussion of sympathy. However, he believed that experience was, by itself, a shaky foundation for morality. For Kant, the only reliable grounding for morals is reason. Key to his project is the ‘categorical imperative’, which is an overarching moral principle valid at all times

and in all places, rather than one relative to particular situations. It is: 'act only in accordance to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law' (Kant 2012, 34).

Because of Kant's great emphasis on reason, many interpreters assume that his ethics is mostly, or even exclusively, concerned with human beings. For this reason, animal ethicists are often more interested in utility than in deontology. Indeed, Kant presents universal law in apparently anthropomorphic terms: 'So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.' (Kant 2012, 41) Lecture notes report him stating that humans have no direct duties to animals. Nevertheless, he also considers that a 'hard-heartedness towards animals is not in accordance with the law of reason, and is at least an unsuitable use of means' (Kant 1997, 434). He goes on to describe any human action that torments animals, or that causes them to suffer distress, as demeaning to humans. Any such action is a violation of the moral duty that humans have to themselves, because it stifles the humane instinct and feeling that are part of human moral integrity.

In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant accepts that animals should be killed quickly and painlessly. Violent and cruel treatment, in contrast, 'weakens and gradually uproots a natural predisposition that is very serviceable to morality in one's relations with other men' (Kant 1991, 237–8). Kant also expresses this idea systematically, drawing a distinction between 'duty *with regard to* other beings' and 'duty *to* those beings'. Humans, he argues, have no direct duty *to* animals: in the matter of safeguarding their welfare, the only direct duty is to humans. Even so, humans unquestionably have duties *with regard to* animals. For Kant, from the fact that only humans may act morally it in no way follows that only humans are worthy of moral consideration (Korsgaard 2004). He uses the idea of personhood, referred to above in the definition of the categorical imperative, not to restrict the boundaries of ethical consideration, but as figurative shorthand for the rational order that, he argues, exists everywhere in the world. This 'personification' of nature (Wood 1998) is Kant's way of presenting everything in the world as worthy of treatment as an end in itself. Moreover, the specific ethical rules—or, as he calls them, maxims—that are developed when universal law is applied in particular cases carry a force of obligation that means they must always be obeyed. For this reason, deontology is an important ethical principle in farm animal welfare that should not be overlooked.

Even if Kant ultimately views the obligation on humans to refrain from the cruel treatment of animals indirectly, he provides a robust understanding of this obligation that admits of no compromise. Moreover, his theory usefully demonstrates that to take the ethics of animal welfare seriously does not entail an acceptance that animals possess any intrinsic rights or entitlements in relation to humans. Furthermore, the notion of duty translates well into a legal context. In the UK, section 9 of the 2006 Animal Welfare Act lays on the person responsible for an animal a duty to ensure its welfare by meeting its needs. These are taken to include a suitable environment and diet, the ability to exhibit normal behaviour, housing with or apart from other animals, and protection from pain, suffering, injury and disease. This suggests that, in practice, it is widely accepted that, in animal welfare, the deontological principle applies not only to humans, who may be demeaned by inflicting suffering on farmed animals, but also directly to the animals on which such suffering may be inflicted. Moreover, the duty as farmed in the legislation imposes positive duties on stockpersons to provide their animals with the conditions and resources needed to sustain a basic dignified life.

Teleology: promoting animal flourishing

A third ethical principle that may promote the welfare of farmed animals is purpose—or, in Greek, *telos*. This principle is older than both utility and deontology, being traceable to Aristotle, the Athenian philosopher who lived in the fourth century BCE. However, in recent decades teleology has made a comeback, because it has been seen as promoting an holistic approach to ethics that is able to take account of more complex states than mere pain and pleasure (Rollin 2012). Moreover, rather than viewing nature as a competitive arena in which the flourishing of one part requires the diminishment of another part, Aristotle regards the world as a single integrated system in which the flourishing of a part contributes to the flourishing of other parts and of the whole. According to Aristotle, each animal species exhibits a particular natural mode of flourishing that should be respected and promoted within this.

Although more than one-sixth of Aristotle's extant work concerns animals, ethicists have typically ignored it. This is unfortunate, because much is said of relevance to animal welfare in general, and to farm animal welfare in particular. As already explained, key to Aristotle's teleology is the belief that

every living being exists for a purpose within an ordered whole. He values pastoral farming highly, arguing that animals that are farmed fulfil their purpose more fully than wild animals. This is because their entire life, from birth to death, is rationally ordered by humans, just as, in humans, the rational soul governs the bodily passions (Aristotle 2000, 68).

Teleology provides an ethical grounding for the concept of a 'good life', which in farm animal welfare designates a condition of flourishing considerably higher than the legal minimum (Farm Animal Welfare Council 2009, 16). An animal that is said to have a good life will live free of avoidable suffering and enjoy a variety of positive, freely-chosen environments and experiences. In the first book of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle develops a rich understanding of the good life, which is readily applicable to farmed animals. In his terms, the good of an animal is that at which it aims. This aim is determined by function, which in the case of animals is sentience, which requires nourishment, which leads to growth, which contributes to the excellence with which the animal fulfils its function of sentient living (Aristotle 2004, 3–30). It is clear that Aristotle observed the behaviour of particular farmed species in detail. This included characteristics associated with herd and individual health, such as pregnancy, litter size, weight gain, milking cycles and yields. His observations extended further, however, encompassing self-chosen aspects such as feeding habits and dietary preferences, and even dreaming (Grumett 2016). Aristotle observes each animal species exhibiting a range of freely-chosen normal behaviours. This suggests that humans should not only permit these, but actively enable them, in order that individual animals may fulfil these behaviours, alongside others of their species, to the greatest extent possible (Harfeld 2013).

As Martha Nussbaum points out, teleology means that species is an ethically relevant characteristic. Whereas the principle of utility, being grounded in the concept of sentience, may be used in support of the position that all sentient life (human, animal, microbial) is worthy of equal moral consideration, the ends and types of flourishing that are naturally sought by some species are evidently of a higher level than those pursued by others. To designate these higher modes of flourishing, Nussbaum uses the term capabilities (Nussbaum 2007, 360–407). Her discussion suggests that farmed animals, being more highly developed than many wild species, demand a relatively high level of ethical consideration. In any case, the concepts of flourishing and capability are well-suited to the task of promoting a welfare standard higher than one based on the provision of basic freedoms from harm.

Prudence: relating knowledge to principles

It is sometimes assumed that different ethical systems are in competition and that one must be preferred over others. In fact, the principles of utility (consequences), deontology (obligation) and teleology (purpose) support each other. To be required to take utility seriously entails an obligation to consider the likely consequences of future actions. Deontology based on the idea of making individual ethical rules comply with universal law suggests some overall purpose for the world into which particular purposes fit. Teleology suggests that the consequences of actions have some significance, because they promote or hinder the flourishing of other living beings. Ethical theorists enjoy imagining extreme cases in which different principles commend sharply contrasting courses of action, but such conundrums are a long way removed from the daily lives of most farmers, stockpersons, food business operators, investors, retailers and consumers. In the practical context of promoting farm animal welfare, different ethical principles are likely to be mutually reinforcing.

The greater challenge in ethical decision making about farmed animals is bringing facts and principles together and acting. A person might have a strong grasp of facts and an equivalently clear ethical conviction, but be unable to synthesise the two. Such a person is likely to behave inconsistently and attribute responsibility for situations to others, depending on whether, at any particular time, their focus is on facts or on principles. What is missing in such a person is a developed moral character, which would enable them to act effectively in real life situations. In book 6 of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines the capacity of combining facts and principles effectively in deliberating about how to act as prudence (Aristotle 2004, 144–66).¹ Unlike animal welfare research, the kind of reasoning that prudence uses is unscientific, because it does not seek to prove any particular theory. Nevertheless, prudence is intellectual as well as practical, being concerned with what is good and bad rather than simply with what is the case, as are the purely practical tasks of observation and information gathering.

¹ This classical concept of prudence is very different from the modern popular understanding, which is typically associated with inaction or indecisive action.

It might reasonably be claimed that ordinary description is never entirely separated from ethical principles. According to the theory of 'thick' description, if, for example, I describe a laying hen as 'thirsty', I am not only making a neutral statement about its desire for water but identifying this as a bad state of affairs that I or anyone else standing close by should take action to address. This is a fair and important point. Although it is useful for expository and critical purposes—such as this chapter—to keep knowledge and principles distinct, the concept of prudence suggests that the two are, in practice, interrelated. Ethical principles help shape how we perceive the world and structure the facts presented to us, just as we develop those principles in tandem with our experience of the world around us.

Individuals with prudence, whether they be farmers, stockpersons, food business operators, investors, retailers or consumers, will be able to negotiate the complexities of ethical action and act responsibly. Prudence is especially needed when dealing with issues related to farm animals, because compromise is required. All producers, sellers and consumers of meat operate on the understanding that it is ethically acceptable for animals to be killed for human consumption. The principles of utility, deontology or teleology could each, if taken to an extreme, be deployed to refute this understanding, but the ethical conclusions reached would be of little use in an industry based on the assumption that animals may be reared, killed and eaten in huge quantities.

It is also necessary to handle uncertainty. On the farming side, the effects on animals of different feeding and slaughter methods are not known with complete certainty, being the object of ongoing research. A precautionary approach is therefore advisable, recognising that, although some methods might not harm animals, knowledge of the facts is incomplete and further evidence is needed before a particular practice may be endorsed. On the consumer side, reliable knowledge of farming methods needs to be obtained from objective sources and subjected to rigorous evaluation objectively, rather than reliance being placed on uninterrogated assumptions that might be false. For example, images on packaging of green fields or a smiling farming family convey no reliable information about the welfare conditions in which animals have been kept, and may be used purely to boost sales. Meat from an independent butcher might be produced to a higher welfare standard than supermarket meat, although in many urban areas might also, unlike supermarket meat, be the product of non-stun slaughter. There are big legitimate questions about this slaughter method, it is likely to cause animals to experience greater pain than those slaughtered after mechanical, electrical or low atmospheric pressure stunning as appropriate to their species.

The practical imperative to compromise and to acknowledge uncertainty are both contradicted by simplistic stances. A constructive response is often to employ language carefully. In public debate, critiques are frequently launched of 'industrial' or 'factory farming', even though this is a meaningless term in that it has no formal definition in law or welfare science. To determine whether a particular animal has been 'industrially' farmed would require scoring against an accepted list of measures such as stocking density, natural light levels, feeding regime and the availability of outdoor space, and agreement on the point at which these scores, whether separately or in combination according to a formula about which there was consensus, defined a transition from one farming type to another. Moreover, because farmed animals live in relationship with humans and require human care, an animal housed indoors with its needs met will enjoy a higher quality of life than an animal living in a field that is, for instance, cold or has an inadequate food supply.

RELIGION

In the context of farm animal welfare, religion has become a contentious topic because of its primary association in the public mind with non-stun slaughter, which the UK government permits for animals intended for Islamic halal and Jewish kosher consumption. The wide public concern about this slaughter method, although not always well informed (Grumett 2015), is appropriate, given it is likely that cutting an animal's neck with a sharp knife does not render it immediately unconscious and that the animal therefore experiences significant pain before death (Johnson, Mellor, Hemsworth and Fisher 2015). Advocates of non-stun slaughter who believe that it is no more painful, or even less painful, than slaughter with pre-stunning, need to engage with the scientific evidence that suggests this may be untrue. Moreover, considerably more meat is produced by non-stun slaughter than is required by Muslims and Jews, with the excess being sold in the wholesale market or at independent butchers. Because there are far more British Muslims (about 3 million) than British Jews (about 350,000), this is more of an issue in the halal sector than in the kosher sector simply because this sector is far larger.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that religion is by no means entirely bad news for animals. In general, religious communities develop and transmit ethical systems, including in the field of animal welfare. The slaughter method, although very important, is but one aspect of a larger picture. The halal and kosher designations may also indicate welfare gains above the secular legal minimum. From a theological standpoint, to describe a particular food as halal or kosher means that it is permissible, or fit for consumption. This indicates that it conforms to a series of welfare requirements. According to Islamic teaching, animals killed or used for their products must not be mistreated or mutilated at any point in their life (Masri 2007, 34–5, 48–9). Taken seriously, the prohibition against mistreatment would certainly suggest that the Five Freedoms, which were discussed earlier, should be safeguarded. Moreover, when an animal is killed, this must be done quickly and professionally according to the applicable rules, which include a prayer that recognizes the value of the life of the individual animal as a gift of Allah (Masri 2007, 49–50, 145–6). This should have the effect of preventing animals being seen in purely instrumental terms or as no more than production units to satisfy human wants. In addition, animals killed as a sacrifice, such as on the festival of Eid or for another family occasion, must not be blemished, that is, not be underfed, blind or lame (Masri 2007, 125). Comparable requirements and justifications exist in the far smaller UK kosher meat sector (Shechita UK 2009, 4).

These welfare requirements are far removed from the imagery conjured by the emotive and frequently-used phrase ‘religious slaughter’, and point to a shared understanding across Islam, Judaism and Christianity of animals as created by God and therefore as the property of God rather than of humankind. Indeed, within the halal sector the concept of *tayyib*, meaning wholesome, is available and increasingly in use to designate meat and farm animal products that do not simply conform to the minimum Islam requirements but meet a high physical and moral food standard, which potentially includes a high standard of farm animal welfare.

In reality, religion is currently a significant source of division in farm animal welfare because food traditions and rules help to define community (Grumett and Muers 2010, 89–106). Animal farming requires the ownership, or at least the use, of rural land, and in the United Kingdom this is almost exclusively the preserve of people who are white and Christian, at least nominally. A similar demography is apparent in allied occupations such as veterinary science. Muslim and Jewish people have very little involvement in animal farming, meaning that the full lifecycle of an animal farmed according to halal or kosher principles is not visible. Rather, halal and kosher meat is regulated by certification schemes that place an emphasis on the slaughter method, which is easily verifiable. In these schemes, similar matters of trust arise as in the secular contexts described at the beginning of this chapter. Some halal retailers consider that their reputation in the local community and commendations from its leaders provide sufficient endorsement and consumer assurance, especially as some halal consumers are wary about taking formal endorsements on trust (Miele and Rucinska 2015). Nevertheless, other consumers and community leaders prefer certification schemes.

With regard to Islam, attitudes to slaughter methods are often more conservative in diaspora religious communities than in states in which Islam is the largest religion or the officially recognised religion. In countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, much of the meat consumed is imported from New Zealand, where stunning is mandated by law without exception (Salamano et al. 2013). In the Muslim states in which this meat is consumed, it is widely accepted as halal. This suggests that, in countries such as the UK, better understanding needs to be gained of the views of believers about farm animal welfare in general and stunning in particular. These may differ from those promoted by their representative food authorities, which are not entirely consistent with the rules and practices in other parts of the Muslim world.

Conclusion

Being concerned with underlying commitments, beliefs and motivations, ethics and religion perform a role in farm animal welfare that is different from scientific investigation. They provide principles that may, in a person with prudence, shape the responses to facts about farm animal welfare, whether of a farmer, a stockperson, a food business operator, an investor, a retailer or a consumer. For this reason, ethics and religion each have significant and distinctive positive contributions to make to farm animal welfare.

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